Vol.1 No.2

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This book is intended for readers aged 18 and up. It may contain themes considered “mature.”

ASHES, ASHES

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MAGNETIC™

ISBN: 978-1-951719-12-8
Library of Congress Control Number: 2021909391

Ashes, Ashes by Morvan, Macutay, and Walter, Published 2021 by Magnetic Press, LLC.
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Printed in China.

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LA VILLE D'OR

DUBOIS!

SIR?

SEND IN BLANCHE ROUGET.

MAGNIFICENT...

THAT'S KIND, I...

SIT DOWN, BEAUTIFUL.

PLEASE.

I ASKED YOU HERE TO LET YOU KNOW JUST HOW HAPPY I AM....!

I'M CERTAIN YOUR DEBUT WILL BE A HIT! I'M SO PROUD TO HAVE DISCOVERED YOU!

THE MUSIC INDUSTRY HAS NEVER SEEN A STAR LIKE YOU!

YOU SING LIKE A NIGHTINGALE, DANCE LIKE A GODDESS, AND YOU'RE EVEN MORE BEAUTIFUL IN PERSON THAN ON SCREEN...

...AS IMPOSSIBLE AS THAT MAY SEEM...

I HOPE YOU AREN'T TOO TIRED FROM REHEARSING?

A LITTLE, BUT IT'S NICE!

THANKS TO YOU, **OVERBOARD 3000** WILL SET NEW RECORDS....!

I THINK YOU'LL LIKE YOUR NEW STAGE NAME. "BLANCHE ROUGET" ISN'T REALLY A STAR'S NAME....

BUT "REGINA VOX"...?

...GOT A RING TO IT, DOESN'T IT? WE'VE BEEN SPREADING THAT NAME ACROSS EVERY NETWORK FOR THE LAST TWO WEEKS!

YOU'LL BE THE QUEEN OF THE ETHER...!

TO CELEBRATE YOUR BAPTISM, I'M TAKING YOU TO DINNER IN ICELAND TOMORROW NIGHT.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

I'M... I'M SORRY, MISTER SEITA, BUT TOMORROW NIGHT WON'T WORK FOR ME. I'M HAVING DINNER WITH FRANCOIS DESCHAMPS, A CHILDHOOD FRIEND WHO'S COMING TO VISIT...

...HE'S SUPPOSED TO GIVE ME SOME NEWS ABOUT MY PARENTS.

HMM. TOO BAD... THEN LET'S SAY THE DAY AFTER.

OKAY, THAT SOUNDS GOOD.

SO THIS FRIEND, WHAT DOES HE DO? THIS... FRANCOIS? FRANCOIS WHAT?

FRANCOIS DESCHAMPS. HE TOOK THE ENTRANCE EXAMS FOR THE COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURAL CHEMISTRY TWO MONTHS AGO. MORE THAN TWO THOUSAND CANDIDATES COMPETING FOR ONLY THREE HUNDRED SPOTS...

...THE RESULTS SHOULD BE POSTED SOON...

HE'S COMING TO PARIS FOR THE ANNOUNCEMENT.

DESPITE THE HEAVY COMPETITION, HE'S HOPEFUL...

...I CAN'T WAIT TO SEE HIM.

HE DOESN'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT OUR CONTRACT...

...HE THINKS I'M STILL STUDYING AT THE NATIONAL SCHOOL OF ADMINISTRATION.

I HOPE HE WON'T BE ANGRY... HE'S KIND OF LIKE MY BIG BROTHER. HE'S ABOUT FIVE YEARS YOUNGER THAN YOU...

YOUR PARENTS DON'T KNOW EITHER?

2052

l'avenir est ici

NO, BUT EVERYONE WILL BE REALLY HAPPY FOR ME, I'M SURE.

OF COURSE THEY WILL. SUCCESS EXCUSES EVERYTHING.

SEE YOU VERY SOON, MS. VOX!

DUBOIS, A FRIEND OF BLANCHE IS COMING TO PARIS...

...A STUDENT NAMED FRANCOIS DESCHAMPS...

...FIND ME EVERYTHING YOU CAN ABOUT THIS GUY...

FINALLY, SOME AIR!

SORRY, METRO...

...PARIS IS WORTH STRETCHING MY LEGS!

TIME TO SPEND SOME MONEY!

UGC DANTON

Saint-Germain

Chez La Mère

Bienvenue Chez La Mère

GRILLADES

Filet de boeuf saignant

THIS MEAT IS SURPRISINGLY GOOD...

IT DOESN'T TASTE LIKE AN ANIMAL MURDERED IN A SLAUGHTERHOUSE!

AH, I MISSED THIS IRON DOOR...

PFF...

THEY'D RATHER CRAM THEMSELVES INTO A BOX THAN USE THEIR LEGS...

...NO WONDER PARISIANS HAVE GOTTEN SO BLOATED.

THEY'VE FORGOTTEN THAT EFFORT LEADS TO PERSEVERANCE!

OR THEY'D RATHER NOT THINK ABOUT IT...

BUT YOU, MY BEAUTIFUL BLANCHETTE...

...YOU'RE NOT LIKE THEM...

BLANCHE?

FRANCOIS?

I LOVE YOU.

IT'S FATE...

IT'S ALL FATE.

REGINA.

BE MINE...

...

...AND YOU'LL HAVE EVERYTHING.

WHUH?!

WHAT A NIGHTMARE...

...I'M SWEATING.

HELLO MISTER SEITA.

Jérôme Seita

appel vidéo entrant

COME ON, CALL ME JEROME.

WHY ARE YOU HIDING YOURSELF?

BECAUSE I'M... NOT PRESENTABLE. I'M... IN THE SHOWER.

I'VE JUST BEEN CALLED TO MELBOURNE. I'LL BE GONE FOR TWO DAYS.

I WANT TO BRING YOU TO DINNER SOMEWHERE TONIGHT TO SIGN YOUR CONTRACT.

YOU CAN SEE YOUR FRIEND TOMORROW...

BUT, I PROMISED...

NOW, NOW, A PARISIAN DOESN'T HAVE TO KEEP A PROMISE...

MOULIN ROUGE
TROIS
BA
MOULIN ROUGE
Féerie

WOW!

BLANCHETTE! YOU LOOK STUNNING!

YOU'RE TEN TIMES TANNER THAN EVERY PARISIAN COMBINED!

I WASN'T EXPECTING YOU THIS EARLY...

...BUT IT'S A NICE SURPRISE! IT'S BEEN HARD BEING SO FAR AWAY THESE PAST FEW WEEKS...

...

YOU'RE NOT THE ONLY ONE TO TELL ME THAT, YOU BIG JOCK.

SHUT UP. IT WASN'T THAT LONG. YOU JUST MISSED PARIS, THAT'S ALL.

HAH! ALL I DREAM ABOUT IS LEAVING THE CITY...!

BUT YOU'RE RIGHT, WE'VE GOT PLENTY OF TIME TO GET SERIOUS.

LISTEN, FRANCOIS. I... I ACTUALLY CAME EARLY TO TELL YOU THAT I CAN'T HAVE DINNER WITH YOU TONIGHT...

...I JUST WANTED TO KISS YOU.

YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO COME JUST FOR THAT, BLANCHETTE. A CALL WOULD'VE BEEN FINE... IT'S NOTHING SERIOUS, IS IT?

?

NO. JUST A LITTLE TIRED AND A SERIOUS NEED TO SLEEP. CALL ME TOMORROW. YOU'RE NOT ANGRY, ARE YOU?

YES.

BUT NOT BECAUSE OF YOU. I DIDN'T PASS THE EXAM.

WHAT? BUT YOU'RE SO BRILLIANT! THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE!

YEAH, AND HEADMASTER LIOT TOLD ME IN CONFIDENCE THAT I WAS AT THE TOP OF MY CLASS...

...NOW, SUDDENLY, I'M NOT EVEN ON THE LIST. I SPENT THE ENTIRE MORNING TRYING TO CALL HIM...

...BUT I COULDN'T GET THROUGH. I WENT OUT FOR A RUN TO CLEAR MY HEAD.

I HAVE TO FIGURE OUT WHAT HAPPENED...

TAXI
PARISIEN
THE MAIN ENTRANCE IS BEHIND LE SACRE-COEUR, MA'AM.
BLANCHE ROUGET
ACCESS TO 92nd FLAT GRANTED
LA VILLE D'OR

WELCOME TO MY PLACE, REGINA.

JUST ONE LAST MESSAGE TO SEND AND THEN WE'LL GO.

OH, YOU HAVE AN ANCESTORIUM...

BAH, I HAD PLENTY OF SPACE FOR IT...

I WAS ABLE TO GATHER DNA ALL THE WAY BACK TO MY GREAT-GRANDPARENTS...

I RECONSTRUCTED THEIR APARTMENTS...

...AND MADE THEM PERFORM THEIR FAVORITE ACTIVITIES IN A LOOP!

I'VE NEVER SEEN ONE IN REAL LIFE...

DONE!

LET'S GO.

FOLLOW ME.

ARE YOU READY, BLANCHE?

COMING, MISTER SEITA.

JEROME...

...I INSIST.

ARE YOU COMFORTABLE?

YES, JEROME.

EXCELLENT!

I MADE RESERVATIONS AT AN INCREDIBLE RESTAURANT OVERLOOKING REYKJAVIK...

IT'S SO HOT IN PARIS RIGHT NOW; I THOUGHT SOME RELATIVELY COOL AIR WOULD DO US SOME GOOD!

ISN'T IT A LITTLE FAR JUST FOR DINNER?

YOU'D THINK... BUT IT'S JUST A HOP!

I'D LIKE YOU TO REMEMBER THIS DAY FOR THE REST OF YOUR LIFE... THE DAY I MADE YOU...

...A STAR!

Blanche Rouget

Blanche Rouget

CONGRATULATIONS, BLANCHE!

OUR DESTINIES ARE NOW INTERTWINED, FOR BETTER AND FOR...

...GLORY!

I JUST WIRED YOU YOUR FIRST PAYMENT.

MAKE SURE IT WENT THROUGH...

IS THIS... IS THIS REALLY ALL MINE?

AND, IN ADDITION, I'M BUYING DINNER TONIGHT.

HA! HA! HA!

HA... PLEASE, COME CLOSER.

CLICK HERE.

WHAT IS THIS?

AN EXTRA LITTLE SURPRISE: THE FINAL VERSION OF YOUR FIRST VIDEO...

VueTube

MY EYES ARE THE SKY,
MY HAIR IS THE WIND...

VueTube
130 views

MY MOUTH IS THE SHADOW
THAT GETS CAST,
MY HEAD AGAINST YOURS
IS A SLEEPING BIRD...

REGINA VOX
Chanson Pour Une Princesse

VueTube
116,768 views

MY SKIN IS A SILK SCARF,
THE SWEETEST FLOWER OF
LOVE, A POISONOUS TRAP...

JAURÈS

Bobigny

696,197 views

MY HANDS ARE A
SONG...

SERIOUSLY, ANOTHER AD FOR
SOME STUPID ARTI...

?!

...THAT A SHEPHERD
SINGS IN THE
MORNING...

BLANCHE?

ARE YOU SEEING THESE NUMBERS, BLANCHE?

WE'RE A HIT!

THIS IS INCREDI...

IS SOMETHING WRONG?

NO... I'M JUST TIRED ALL OF A SUDDEN...

YOU MUST BE OVERWHELMED.

Appel entrant...

François Deschamps

Refuser

Répondre

Répondre

MUST BE.

WE'RE BLOWING PAST TWO MILLION ALREADY!

I DIDN'T LIE TO YOU, MY LITTLE BLANCHE!

François Deschamps

Nouveau message texte

I've been trying to call you, but that hasn't worked, so I'm writing instead. I just saw your video on my computer. Now I understand why you couldn't meet tonight.
I can't believe it. You... Regina Vox.

I'd be lying if I said that I'm happy for your change in circumstances. There's no doubt you'll make more money than a minister, but I hope you won't let yourself be misled by all of the compliments and praise you'll no doubt accumulate. Stay nice, Blanchette. Try to avoid becoming one of those stars who are nothing more than puppets with silly smiles. Don't forget that your new life is fake.

Just because you can now get whatever you want with the press of a button, it doesn't mean that you're a goddess. Your legs are no more beautiful dancing on all the screens of the world than when they were mine alone to love. Stay yourself. Love your work. But don't be vain. Remember: only one thing matters: effort.

HONESTLY, THE SITUATION MORTIFIES ME, FRANCOIS. I'M SURE YOU COULD HEAR THE JOY IN MY VOICE REVEALING YOUR RESULTS TO YOU IN MARSEILLE...

IF ANYONE DESERVED IT, IT WAS YOU. AND THEN, A FEW HOURS LATER, I GOT A CALL FROM JEROME SEITA'S SECRETARY PASSING ALONG AN ORDER TO ERASE YOU FROM THE LIST...

SEITA'S FATHER CREATED A TRUST AT THE UNIVERSITY... WHICH HE NOW CONTROLS...

I HAD NO CHOICE, FRANCOIS. I SWEAR.

I BELIEVE YOU, MISTER LIOT.

I'LL HAVE TO MEET THIS GENTLEMAN TO UNDERSTAND WHAT HE HAS AGAINST ME.

GOOD LUCK WITH THAT.

I WON'T NEED LUCK, BELIEVE ME.

PLEASE, DON'T...

DON'T WORRY, I WON'T MENTION THAT WE SPOKE ABOUT THIS.

GOODBYE, MISTER LIOT. PLEASE KNOW THAT, OVER ALL THESE YEARS, I HIGHLY RESPECTED YOU.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO GO RIGHT NOW...

I REALLY DON'T FEEL WELL.

ALL THE MORE REASON TO STAY. REST HERE A WHILE.

I PROMISE, I'LL CALL A TAXI FOR YOU AS SOON AS WE CROSS THE 3 MILLION MARK!

HERE, TAKE THIS.

YOU'RE SO PRETTY, REGINA.

BLANCHE. MY NAME IS BLANCHE.

REGINA!

?!

LET GO OF ME!

YOU OWE ME EVERYTHING! BE NICE TO ME!

WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU?

YOU'RE DRUNK!

WOOO!

AGH!

DON'T BE AFRAID, COME BACK!

WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

I'M HERE FOR YOU!

I'M NOT YOUR ENEMY...!

OPEN UP!

YOU'RE ACTING CRAZY!

THIS IS INSANE...

HOW AM I GOING TO GET OUT OF HERE?

FRANCOIS...

Horizon 10:05 PM

From: Blanchette

I'm trapped at Jerome Seita's apartment. 92nd floor of the Ville d'Or. Help me!